

HB GROUP

I N C O R P O R A T E D

EQUIPMENT RENTALS / TECHNICAL SERVICES

Production Video / Audio / Projection / Display / Audio-Visual

Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Evan Bernstein, and I am a senior account executive with HB Group, Incorporated.

Located in North Haven, Connecticut, HB Group has been providing video, audio, and audio-visual rental equipment and services to companies, organizations, and agencies throughout Connecticut for twenty years.

HB Group currently employs 42 full-time workers. In addition to our full time staff, we hire dozens of technical specialists on a freelance basis. We also arrange for additional equipment and services from dozens of other Connecticut based companies to fill our client's robust requirements for putting together complete presentation solutions.

When we received word this year from the New Haven International Festival of Arts and Ideas that their funding from the state was in jeopardy, thereby signaling that the festival itself was in danger of ceasing, this struck a very deep nerve to our company's financial core.

For the past three years, The New Haven International Festival of Arts and Ideas has become our company's seventh highest annual grossing customer, and it is their annual June festival that has helped them achieve that mark. Over the course of the three week festival, HB Group directly puts into action 18 of our full time employees along with a half dozen freelance technicians, accompanied by a sizable percentage of our audio and video inventory. Suffice to say, The New Haven International Festival of Arts and Ideas represents a significant percentage of our company's revenue stream.

In just the past few months, we have been informed from several of our clients that their annual events that we have had the pleasure of contributing to in past years will no longer be occurring in 2009, and are in doubt for 2010 and beyond. These economic realities have forced our company into a round of layoffs the likes of which we have never experienced in our 20-year history. Just in the last few months, we have had to release 5 full time employees, roughly 10 percent of our workforce. While we are doing everything we can to see that no more layoffs are imminent this year, our company can only take so many more body blows before we buckle under the stress and strain of a shrinking clientele, and are forced to make more adjustments, so that our company can survive these tumultuous economic times.

Members of the committee, I am here tonight to impress upon you the significant and direct impact that the New Haven International festival of Arts and Ideas has on our business, and that our mutual interests are tightly interwoven together. We at HB Group ask that funding from the State of Connecticut continue unabated and unchanged, because to cut the funding for this program represents a financial blow to our company, along with many other vendors that rely on this annual festival.